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ABSTRACT

Twenty to 30 percent of new teachers leave their field within the first 3 years; 9.3 percent don't even make it through their first full year; and after 5 years, roughly 50 percent of beginners have left teaching. Reasons for leaving include pursuit of a more personally appropriate career, low pay, the desire to raise one's own children, and importantly, exhaustion, disillusionment, lack of confidence, and inadequate support. This booklet provides an overview of the wealth of information available for education practitioners and policymakers addressing the problem of supporting and retaining beginning teachers. Schools that provide high levels of support for beginners will retain more and better teachers, and students will reap the rewards of a more positive and effective learning environment overall. Topics include what new teachers need, implementing a program for beginning teachers (new teacher induction programs, teacher mentoring programs, and school-university collaboration), how community members can support new teachers, suggestions for beginning teachers, special considerations for rural schools, and supporting bilingual and minority schools. Three beginning teacher assistance programs practiced in Montana, Oregon, and Washington are described and examples are provided of how unions and state departments in the Northwest support beginning teachers. The appendix contains resources for beginning teachers and mentors. (RT)

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SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS:

How Administrators, Teachers, and Policymakers Can Help New Teachers Succeed

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SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS:

How Administrators, Teachers, and Policymakers Can Help New Teachers Succeed

CORI BREWSTER
&
JENNIFER RAILSBACK

MAY 2001

NORTHWEST REGIONAL
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FOREWORD

This booklet is the 16th in a series of "hot topic" reports produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. They address current educational concerns as indicated by requests for information. Each booklet contains a discussion of research and literature, implications for policy and practice, a sampling of how Northwest educators are addressing the issue, resources, and references.

One objective of the series is to foster a sense of community and connection among educators. Another is to increase awareness of current education-related themes and concerns. Each booklet gives practitioners a glimpse of how fellow educators are addressing issues, overcoming obstacles, and attaining success in certain areas. The goal of the series is to give educators current, reliable, and useful information on topics that are important to them.

Other titles in the series include:

- *Service Learning in the Northwest Region*
- *Tutoring: Strategies for Successful Learning*
- *Scheduling Alternatives: Options for Student Success*
- *Grade Configuration: Who Goes Where?*
- *Alternative Schools: Approaches for Students at Risk*
- *All Students Learning: Making It Happen in Your School*
- *High-Quality Professional Development: An Essential Component of Successful Schools*
- *Student Mentoring*
- *Peaceful Schools*
- *After-School Programs: Good for Kids, Good for Communities*
- *Parent Partners: Using Parents To Enhance Education*
- *When Students Don't Succeed: Shedding Light on Grade Retention*
- *Making Positive Connections With Homeschoolers*
- *Increasing Student Motivation and Engagement: From Time-on-Task to Homework*
- *The Power of Public Relations in Schools*

INTRODUCTION

Talk to almost any teacher about his or her first years in the classroom, and you are likely to hear a similar story. The first few years are consumed with keeping their head above water: struggling to learn a new curriculum, develop lesson plans, deal with behavioral issues, track down supplies, and respond to the various needs of students, parents, fellow faculty members, and administrators (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997). Lacking the seniority of veteran educators, most new teachers also start with the most difficult assignments: remedial classes, multiple preps, and the students with the most diverse and challenging needs (DePaul, 2000; Gordon, 1991; Halford, 1999; Kestner, 1994).

It should be no surprise, then, that 20–30 percent of new teachers leave the field within the first three years (DePaul, 2000; Moir, n.d .); 9.3 percent don't even make it through their first full year (Weiss & Weiss, 1999). And, after five years, roughly 50 percent of beginners have left teaching (Anderson, 2000; Kestner, 1994). Undoubtedly, some of these new teachers discover they aren't well-suited for the job, and go on to pursue careers that better match their interests and skills. Others leave due to low pay, and still others to raise children of their own. This does not account, however, for the vast number of promising teachers who leave because of exhaustion, disillusionment, lack of confidence, and inadequate support (DePaul, 2000).

Since the 1980s, interest in ways to improve teachers' first experiences in the profession has grown steadily, spurred on by teacher shortages, ever-increasing student populations, and the alarming numbers of new teachers who leave education to find jobs in other fields. This booklet provides an overview of the

wealth of information on supporting and retaining beginning teachers that has been produced during the last two decades.

Designed with teachers, administrators, and policymakers in mind, this booklet provides a synthesis of recent research, describes programs to support beginning teachers, and offers tips for helping new teachers thrive. We have also identified resources for beginning teachers, and for readers interested in developing programs of their own.

In Context

Finding ways to support and retain new teachers is an issue with implications for students, parents, veteran teachers, administrators, teacher educators, policymakers, and taxpayers, not to mention the new teachers themselves. High teacher turnover leads to less stable and less effective learning environments for students; places greater demands on teachers and other school staff members; and increases the amount of money and time that must be spent recruiting, hiring, and training replacements (DePaul, 2000). It also limits schools' ability to carry out long-term planning, curriculum revision, and reform, which may in turn have a significant impact on school funding (Halford, 1999).

Developing effective means of supporting and retaining new teachers is especially crucial when it comes to bilingual teachers and teachers of color (DePaul, 2000; Kestner, 1994; Torres-Guzman, 1996). A 1997 Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory report projected that minority student enrollment will reach 22 percent by 2005, while the number of teachers of color will reach only 8.6 percent (NWREL, 1997). At the same time, the number of English-language learners (ELL) is also steadily increasing, creating an ever-greater demand for qualified teachers sensitive to the needs of non-native speakers and students from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Lenhardt, 2000; Moir, n.d.).

Other areas in which many schools face serious teacher shortages are math, science, and special education. Because of the abundance of better-paying private sector jobs for people with math and science backgrounds, districts must work even harder to make teaching a positive and rewarding experience for new science and math educators. Beginning special educators, as

well, must be offered all the support and encouragement possible if the number of vacancies in special education programs across the country is to go down.

Clearly, if we are to keep up with school reform movements, increasingly diverse student populations, and the growing demand for quality educators, we must find effective ways to retain the promising new teachers we have (Geringer, 2000).

Benefits of Providing Quality Support for New Teachers

Although there have been few large-scale studies of new teacher induction programs, existing data confirm that schools that provide high levels of support for beginners do retain more teachers (Goodwin, 1999). The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP), for example, which has been in existence since 1993, reports that 90 percent of participating teachers have remained in the profession (Moir, n.d.). Weiss and Weiss (1999) cite a 93 percent retention rate in urban districts that provide formal induction programs for beginners.

Higher retention rates are not the only benefit associated with programs for new teachers, however. Structured mentoring and induction programs in particular have been linked to numerous benefits for students and schools, as well as for participating teachers (Breaux, 1999; Weiss & Weiss, 1999).

Benefits for students and schools:

- Higher student achievement and test scores (Ganser, Marchione, & Fleischmann, 1999; Geringer, 2000; Goodwin, 1999)
- Higher-quality teaching and increased teacher effectiveness (Goodwin, 1999; Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolffe, 1992; Weiss & Weiss, 1999)
- Stronger connections among the teaching staff, leading to a more positive and cohesive learning environment for students
- Less time and money spent on recruiting and hiring replacements (Halford, 1999)

Benefits for teachers:

- Larger and more sophisticated repertoire of teaching strategies (Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolffe, 1992)

- Stronger classroom management skills (Educational Resources Information Center, 1986)
- Ability to deal with behavior and discipline problems more effectively
- Increased job satisfaction for both new and veteran teachers (Moir, n.d.)
- Lower levels of stress, anxiety, and frustration for beginning teachers
- Opportunities for veteran educators to revisit and reflect on teaching practices and philosophy

The problem, many researchers note, is that effective programs to support new teachers are still few and far between (Renard, 1999; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). Despite the popularity and spread of programs for new teachers, too many lack what it takes to be effective: adequate funding, staff training, administrative support, and careful attention to beginners' needs (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997). Although many schools provide orientation programs for new hires, they often focus primarily on school policies and procedures, falling short of the ongoing professional support, training, and encouragement that new teachers need. The following sections identify areas in which beginners most need assistance and highlight "best practices" for building successful and effective programs.

What Do New Teachers Need?

The first step in developing effective strategies to support new teachers is to identify the areas in which beginners need the most help. Most agree that it's the day-to-day issues that are first priority: where to find necessary supplies, how to deal with behavioral problems, and exactly what classroom materials they need (Gordon, 1991).

Other areas in which beginning teachers frequently need help include:

- Setting up a classroom for the first time
- Learning school routines and procedures (Ganser, Marchione, & Fleischmann, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Heidkamp & Shapiro, 1999)
- Designing lesson plans (Gordon, 1991)
- Developing classroom management skills (Brock & Grady, 1998; DePaul, 2000; Gordon, 1991)
- Responding effectively to behavior and discipline problems
- Teaching with limited resources (DePaul, 2000)
- Motivating students and engaging them in class activities (Gordon, 1991; Kestner, 1994)
- Creating a community of learners
- Working effectively with English-language learners (ELL), learning disabled, and special needs students (Brock & Grady, 1998)
- Understanding social and environmental factors that may contribute to student behavior and performance (Kestner, 1994)
- Assessing student performance (Gordon, 1991; Kestner, 1994)
- Understanding new state and district standards and assessments, and how they affect teaching strategies
- Understanding procedures and policies related to curriculum adoption

- Learning to communicate with and involve parents (Gordon, 1991; Kestner, 1994)
- Developing organization and time management skills (Brock & Grady, 1998; Kestner, 1994)
- Identifying opportunities for professional development (DePaul, 2000)
- Connecting theories and teaching methods learned in college to classroom practice (Brock & Grady, 1998)

Danin and Bacon (1999) suggest that program planners ask new teachers to identify areas to cover in orientations and induction program meetings. This not only increases buy-in for the program, but also ensures that program offerings are relevant to participating teachers (Gordon, 1991).

Implementing a Formal Program for Beginning Teachers

In the hectic first few weeks of a new school year, it can be easy to overlook new teachers, or to assume that somebody else is keeping an eye out for them. Because of this, many schools and districts are implementing formal programs for beginners. Some programs are open to all new hires, regardless of prior teaching experience, while others are designed for teachers in their first through third years of teaching. Described below are three general approaches that can be taken to support new teachers. Any of these models can be developed within a single school, across a district, or at the state level.

New teacher induction programs

Depending on school size, student population, and the specific needs of new teachers, the goals and structure of an induction program may vary from school to school. In general, induction programs function to help beginners make the transition from "students of teaching to teachers of students" (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997). They serve not only to introduce beginners to teaching methods and school policies, but to introduce them to the "culture of teaching" as well. Most consider the induction period to be the first three years on the job, and many districts provide formal induction programs and other types of support for two, if not three full years (Gordon, 1991; Paese, 1990; Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolffe, 1992).

Induction programs may include a combination of some or all of the following:

- School and district orientations (Gordon, 1991)
- Individualized plans for growth and development (Gordon, 1991)

- Monthly seminars on issues of importance to new teachers (Gordon, 1991; Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolffe, 1992)
- Regular opportunities to observe and be observed by other teachers (Heidkamp & Shapiro, 1999; Huling-Austin, 1992)
- Opportunities to team teach with a more experienced educator (Kestner, 1994; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997)
- Alternative standards and modes of evaluation than those used for veteran teachers (Huling-Austin, 1992; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997).
- Opportunities to engage in action research projects with other teachers (Gordon, 1991; Huling-Austin, 1992)
- Modified teaching schedules or assignments, in which new teachers receive smaller loads, fewer preps, or less difficult classes than experienced teachers (Clement, 2000; Huling-Austin, 1992)
- Additional released time for beginning teachers to engage in professional development and/or develop lesson plans (Clement, 2000)
- Opportunities to "share and solve problems" with other beginning teachers (Huling-Austin, 1992)
- Teacher mentors or mentoring teams (Huling-Austin, 1992)

General Guidelines:

- Programs should be developed around the needs of the people to be served by the program. It is important to recognize that, like students, teachers are individuals who have different learning styles, backgrounds, and needs (Gordon, 1991; Kestner, 1994; Lawson, 1992).
- Program goals and purposes should be clear, as should the roles and responsibilities of participating teachers.
- The program should have clear leadership and should be adequately staffed. Some programs hire retired or part-time teach-

ers to coordinate the program, while others rely on the principal to lead the program.

- Program leaders, staff, and veteran teachers should all receive quality, ongoing training on how to work effectively with novice teachers. Training should help participants develop skills for coaching new teachers as well as productive strategies for discussing content area issues and teaching methods.
- Participation in induction programs should not place excessive time demands on new teachers or other staff members.
- Both new and veteran teachers should receive some incentive for participating, whether in the form of money, extra release time, or steps toward career advancement.
- The program should encourage reflective practice, for new teachers as well as the veteran educators assigned to work with them.

Perhaps the most important consideration when developing induction programs is the extent to which they will be tied to evaluation of job performance and decisions regarding a new teacher's continued employment. Clearly, the more evaluative the program is, the less safe new teachers will feel asking questions, taking risks, and participating freely in discussions with other teachers and program staff. Most researchers agree that assistance for new teachers should come before assessment (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997); if possible, the program should not be tied to teacher evaluation at all (Educational Resources Information Center, 1986).

Teacher mentoring programs

In teacher mentoring programs, beginning teachers are paired with a more experienced teacher or, in some cases, with a team of experienced teachers, for guidance and support. Mentors are available to answer questions, observe classes, problem solve,

and talk confidentially to new teachers about problems they may be facing in the classroom. The purpose of the relationship, ultimately, is not just to support the new teacher, but also to maximize his or her effectiveness in the classroom. Mentoring may occur as part of a larger induction program, or may be used separately as a means of supporting and retaining new teachers. In the absence of formal programs, mentoring may also be arranged informally between new teachers and more experienced colleagues.

Although mentoring is commonly viewed as beneficial for beginners, the practice has been criticized for its potential to "promote conventional norms and practices" (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). Feiman-Nemser points out that "few mentor teachers practice the kind of conceptually oriented, learner-centered teaching advocated by reformers." As a result, new teachers run the risk of picking up less effective approaches, and even bad habits, from their mentors. To avoid this, careful attention should be paid to training mentors and providing support for them throughout the process. Feiman-Nemser suggests pairing new teachers with mentors "who are already reformers in their schools and classrooms" or developing "collaborative contexts where mentors and novices can explore new approaches together."

Other considerations to make when pairing new teachers with mentors include:

- Avoid pairing new teachers with their department chair or other immediate supervisor; the more closely mentoring is tied to evaluation, the less willing many new teachers are to take risks and ask questions (Brock & Grady, 1998; Educational Resources Information Center, 1986).
- Mentors should have similar interests and outlooks on teaching (DePaul, 2000). Pairing a new teacher with a mentor who

has dramatically different beliefs, or who is less than enthusiastic about teaching, is unlikely to produce an effective match.

- If the pool of available mentors is large enough, mentor teachers should teach the same grade level and/or subject area as their mentee (Brock & Grady, 1998; Educational Resources Information Center, 1986; Huling-Austin, 1992). Although this is not essential for a good match, it allows pairs to work more closely on curricular issues specific to the beginners' teaching assignment.
- Make an effort to connect teachers responsible for multiple grade levels in one content area (as is often the case in small rural schools) with teachers who have a similar load at another school. While it is important for teachers to have someone to turn to within the school building, being able to discuss the unique challenges of teaching multiple grade levels in a given content area is important, too.
- A good mentor should be accepting of a beginning teacher. Mentors need to see the beginning teacher as a developing professional, rather than as one who needs to be "fixed." Novice teachers need practice and good, caring guidance (Rowley, 1999).

General Guidelines:

- The importance of quality support and training for mentors cannot be emphasized enough (Weiss & Weiss, 1999). Even the most effective teachers need help developing the skills required to build a successful mentoring relationship. Among other things, mentor training should include program goals and purposes, district philosophies, methods of observing and providing feedback to mentees (Halford, 1999), adult learning theories, and "how to integrate subject matter into discussions with novice teachers" (Huling-Austin, 1992).
- Mentors should be paid, given release time, or otherwise rewarded for participating in the program. This makes the

experience less burdensome on the mentor, and also lets mentees feel better about taking up their mentor's time (Halford, 1999).

- Mentoring programs should have administrative support, adequate funding, and clear leadership (Halford, 1999). A mentor teacher should not be expected to be a "stand-in for administration," or to replace the important role principals play in guiding and assisting new teachers (Educational Resources Information Center, 1986).
- Regular times for mentors and mentees to meet should be built into the school schedule. If it is not possible to provide release time to teachers in the school, consider hiring retired teachers as mentors. Some programs hire one person whose sole responsibility is to mentor a number of new teachers (DePaul, 2000).

It should be noted that mentoring programs need not be limited solely to beginning teachers. Educational assistants, school librarians, counselors, school nurses, coaches, and other new staff members can also be included in mentoring and other structured induction programs.

SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

There are lots of possibilities when it comes to collaboration between colleges and K-12 schools. Time, funding, and a shared interest in working together seem to be the key ingredients in making this happen. Although the types of partnerships that can be developed will be determined to a large extent by the school's proximity to a university education program, not all collaborations require that schools and colleges be located in the same town. Videoconferencing, email, and Internet software can be used to facilitate communication with college faculty

members and other participating schools. A few ideas for joint efforts to support new teachers are described below.

- School leaders and education professors can work together to develop mentoring and induction programs for new teachers. In some districts, college faculty members are available to problem solve and discuss concerns with beginning teachers (DePaul, 2000; Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolffe, 1992).
- College faculty members can be invited to lead seminars on topics of importance for new teachers, or to train mentor teachers (Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolffe, 1992). For schools in remote areas, workshops can be held online or through video-conferencing. Providing professional development units or other credit toward recertification gives teachers an additional incentive to participate.
- College professors can be asked to visit classes and lead special activities for students, such as writing workshops or science experiments (DePaul, 2000). This takes some of the pressure off new teachers to develop curriculum, plus providing an opportunity for college faculty members to model effective practice.
- School administrators can work with university education programs to develop extended internship programs, in which education students are placed in classrooms for a full year prior to becoming certified (Moore, 1998).
- K-12 schools and colleges can work together to develop fifth year programs for new teachers, in which first-year teachers combine graduate coursework with classroom experience (Moore, 1998).

General Guidelines:

- Goals and purposes of the collaboration should be clear to everyone involved.
- Schools should provide incentives for new and veteran teachers to participate. This may include stipends, additional release time, college credit, professional development units, or steps toward career advancement.
- Program developers should designate a coordinator for the collaboration, housed either in the school building, at the school district office, or at the college.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that adequate funds and resources are available to establish and sustain the program.

For more detailed guides on how to develop programs for new teachers, see the Appendix.

"How Can I Help?" What Individuals Can Do To Support New Teachers

Program or no program, there are plenty of things veteran teachers, administrators, and other school staff members can do to improve beginners' first years on the job. For starters, everyone in the school community can pitch in to welcome newcomers to the school. Teachers, principals, and staff members can ask new teachers to lunch, invite them to school sporting events, and make an effort to introduce them to other people in the district and the community (Heidkamp & Shapiro, 1999). Department lunch gatherings and other informal meetings go a long way, too. Although it might not seem like much, these gestures help set the tone for teachers' early experiences in the school (DePaul, 2000).

The following sections describe other important steps that veteran teachers and principals can take to ease the beginners' transition into the profession.

Veteran teachers:

- *Don't wait for new teachers to ask for help, or assume that someone else is looking out for them* (Gordon, 1991). Most beginning teachers want the advice and assistance of veterans, but are afraid of looking incompetent if they ask questions (Paese, 1990). They may also feel that they are being a burden, or worry that they are taking up your time.

- *Help new teachers locate classroom materials* (DePaul, 2000). Too often, first-year teachers walk into an empty classroom stripped of the best equipment and supplies (Renard, 1999). Veteran teachers can help beginners gather supplies, find

working equipment, and track down other necessary teaching tools before students arrive. New teachers may also need help setting up their classroom for the first time.

- *Invite new teachers to observe your classes* (DePaul, 2000). Set aside time afterward to answer questions and discuss the techniques you used during the lesson (Huling-Austin, 1992). You may also want to share books and information from workshops that relate to your teaching style. Most new teachers appreciate opportunities to exchange ideas with more experienced educators (Heidkamp & Shapiro, 1999).

- *Offer to visit or observe new teachers' classes.* Most new teachers welcome the opportunity to get feedback on their teaching, especially when it occurs under less threatening circumstances outside formal performance evaluations (DePaul, 2000). It is very important to first establish a relationship of trust with the teacher before an offer to observe is made. Avoid conveying any impression that your observations will be used to evaluate the new teacher. A violation of trust can destroy respect and any future relationship of collegiality. Inviting the new teacher to observe your class first may make the experience less threatening.

- *Share your materials.* There is no more valuable gift to a new teacher than a collection of detailed lesson plans and successful activities that have been tried and tested by an experienced educator. Even if your lesson plans aren't totally applicable to the new teacher's classes, they will provide great models for developing daily activities.

- *Make yourself available to mentor a new teacher.* Whether your school has a formal mentoring program in place or not, you can

offer to set aside a certain amount of time each week to discuss problems, share resources, or just talk with a beginning teacher.

• *Volunteer to take on the more difficult classes and teaching loads.* This might mean agreeing to a higher number of preps each day, or trading the higher-level classes for remedial ones so that new teachers aren't left with the most challenging assignments (Halford, 1999).

• *Offer to lead, or at least to assist with, extracurricular activities and special projects.* Too often, new teachers agree to extra responsibilities as a condition of being hired: the school newspaper, the volleyball team, student government, etc. Not only do these tasks eat up time new teachers need for developing lesson plans and becoming acclimated to the profession, they are also likely to entail more interaction with parents and responsibility for students off school grounds, both of which can be especially stressful for a beginner (Huling-Austin, 1992).

Principals and other administrators:

• *Make new teacher support a priority and take the lead in developing a formal program* (DePaul, 2000). Find out what kinds of assistance beginners in your building need, offer incentives to veteran teachers willing to work with them, and build time into the schedule for teachers to meet and observe one another's classes (DePaul, 2000; Halford, 1999). Plan for new teachers to participate in induction programs for their first two to three years on the job.

• *Make a commitment to fund programs for new teachers.* Ciardi (1995) suggests several innovative ways to come up with money for induction, such as setting aside salary differentials left over

from the retirement of higher paid teachers, using money saved from not having to recruit and hire as many replacements, and asking foundations and local businesses to fund a part- or full-time new teacher coordinator.

- *Don't assign new teachers the most challenging classes* (DePaul, 2000). Avoid burdening beginners with multiple preps, remedial classes, and the most difficult or needy students (Bloom & Davis, n.d.; Halford, 1999).

- *Make an effort to assign new teachers to the same grade level and subject area in which they student taught* (Bloom & Davis, n.d.; Huling-Austin, 1992). This will allow them to get their bearings as a first-time teacher while limiting the amount of new material to which they must adjust. Plus, research has shown that new teachers "learn more about teaching when they teach the same content multiple times" (Huling-Austin, 1992).

- *Provide orientations for new teachers at the beginning of each school year* (Bloom & Davis, n.d.; DePaul, 2000). In the orientation, introduce new teachers to the faculty and staff and cover important school policies. Set aside time in the orientation to discuss the school's mission, vision, and philosophies of teaching, and talk about how each is reflected in school practice. Don't count on the orientation sessions to take the place of a formal induction program, however (Gordon, 1991).

- *Give teachers as much information as possible about their students prior to the first day of school.* Provide them with student reading scores, numbers and proficiency levels of English-language learners, information on special needs students, and demographic information. Then help them interpret these data.

• *Provide new teachers with the materials they need to get started.* Make sure beginners get a faculty handbook, along with curriculum guides that include teaching materials, required curriculum or texts available for teaching, specific learning outcomes, and assessment tools for each grade level (Bloom & Davis, n.d.). Also, make sure that beginners have or know where to find all the supplies and equipment they need for their classrooms.

• *Make your expectations for beginning teachers clear.* Ensure that new teachers understand what you expect in terms of job duties, professionalism, teaching methods, and discipline. Having a clear idea of what they are being asked to do will reduce some of the beginners' anxiety (Bloom & Davis, n.d.).

• *Tell new teachers that you are invested in their success.* Let them know you will support them when it comes to discipline and confrontations with parents (DePaul, 2000), and encourage them to talk to you about any problems they are not sure how to handle.

• *Set aside time to drop in or meet with new teachers on a weekly basis* (Bloom & Davis, n.d.). This not only cuts down on teachers' sense of isolation, but also shows your supportiveness, and provides a forum for discussing issues teachers are facing before they become overwhelming (DePaul, 2000; Sullivan, 1999).

• *Find ways to draw new teachers out of their classrooms and into the larger school community.* Bloom and Davis (n.d.) advise administrators to "integrate new teachers into the teaching staff, the site council, and the school community. Do so in ways that allow new teachers to showcase their strengths, and that don't pile on added responsibilities."

◆ *Support new teachers' participation in professional development activities.* Administrators can help beginners identify priorities for development, and point them toward inservice opportunities that, at least for the first year, are "relevant to the day-to-day" (Bloom & Davis, n.d.). Also, help new teachers understand state recertification, clock hour, and endorsement requirements.

For additional resources on ways to develop a mentoring relationship with beginning teachers, see the Appendix.

Suggestions for Beginning Teachers

The importance of structured induction programs and support for new teachers cannot be emphasized enough. However, there are lots of steps new teachers can take to help themselves when starting their first job or walking into a new school. Whether the school provides a strong induction program or not, new teachers can take the initiative in getting assistance and locating resources. Even when principals and more experienced teachers have the best of intentions, there will be things they overlook.

Beginning teachers can:

- *Ask for help.* Don't be afraid of looking incompetent if you ask questions—no one expects you to know it all right off the bat (Renard, 1999).

- *Seek out a mentor.* Whether the school has a formal mentoring program in place or not, there is nothing to stop new teachers from seeking out more experienced educators for guidance and support (Renard, 1999).

- *Ask to observe more experienced teachers' classes.* Watching others teach will not only help you to visualize how specific strategies and teaching methods work, but will show veteran teachers that you are open to their suggestions and advice.

- *Avoid negative elements in the school.* Don't let others' lack of enthusiasm for teaching or new techniques get you down (DePaul, 2000). Make an effort to connect with experienced teachers who enjoy their job, engage in ongoing professional development activities, and are generally enthusiastic about teaching (Renard, 1999).

- *Make an effort to get to know other teachers.* Invite them to your room for lunch, and participate in after-school activities with other staff members.

- *Form or join a support group with other new teachers in the district.* Establishing a peer group will provide you and other beginners a safe place to exchange ideas and discuss issues common to new teachers.

- *Connect with the principal early on.* Ask him or her to observe your class and provide feedback (DePaul, 2000). Although this might seem scary at first, it is better to establish a relationship now—and demonstrate your willingness to learn—than wait for formal performance evaluations.

- *Search out resources, both within and outside the school.* If the principal does not provide you with a faculty handbook or curriculum guide, ask for these things. You can also take the initiative to find books, magazines, and Internet sites that provide tips for beginning teachers (Renard, 1999).

- *Identify and join professional organizations in your field* (Renard, 1999). Membership in professional teaching organizations, such as the National Science Teachers Association or the National Council of Teachers of English, will provide opportunities to network with other educators. As a member of one of these groups, you will also be notified of upcoming conferences, relevant publications, and other sources of current research and information on your content area.

For a list of print and Internet resources for new teachers, see the Appendix.

Special Considerations for Rural Schools

Because of their size and distance from larger communities, rural schools often face additional challenges when it comes to beginning teachers (Anderson, 2000; Collins, 1999; Lenhardt, 2000). For one thing, the school may have trouble finding applicants with connections to the area. Although there may be benefits to bringing a new person into a small community to teach, the feelings of loneliness, isolation, and stress are magnified when new teachers lack personal support systems outside school (Collins, 1999; Henson & Shapiro, 1999).

Geographic isolation of rural schools, particularly in states like Alaska, Idaho, and Montana, presents other barriers, too: school-university partnerships can be more difficult to implement, there may be fewer available mentors nearby, and regular meetings with teachers in the same subject area or grade level are nearly impossible (Geringer, 2000). A few ideas for supporting and retaining new teachers in rural schools are described below.

- *Attempt to recruit teachers who are originally from rural areas, and provide incentives for them to remain in the community.* Some states, including Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and Florida, offer financial incentives, such as low-rent housing, low-interest home loans, or partial forgiveness of college debts, to encourage teachers to stay in hard-to-staff rural schools (Collins, 1999).

- *Make an extra effort to welcome new teachers and get them involved in the community.* The more connected beginning teachers feel to the school and to people in the community (students and parents, as well as administrators and other teachers), the more likely they are to have a positive experience and stay (Collins, 1999; Henson & Shapiro, 1999).

◆ *Consider developing an online mentoring partnership with other small schools in the region.* If possible, collaborate with similar sized schools that have roughly the same demographics as your school. This way, a new teacher responsible for teaching all levels of a given subject, such as high school math, can be paired with a more experienced teacher who has a similar assignment at another small school. While there is no substitute for having a mentor on hand in your own school building, being paired with someone who teaches the same grade or the same subjects under similar circumstances is valuable, too. For a description of an online mentoring program in Montana, see the Northwest Sampler section of this booklet.

◆ *Support both new and veteran teachers' participation in quality professional development activities* (Geringer, 2000). This may mean setting aside more money for travel, providing extra release time, or offering stronger incentives for teachers to take classes, attend seminars, and engage in collaborative action research. Point new teachers in the direction of distance learning opportunities (Collins, 1999).

◆ *Provide the technology, including e-mail and Internet access, for new teachers to remain connected to colleagues, former professors, and friends in other areas.* Two North Carolina school districts used videoconferencing to allow teachers at several rural schools to discuss issues specific to beginning teachers (Henson & Shapiro, 1999).

◆ *Guide new teachers to resources available to them over the Internet.* Ensure they have the technology (i.e., computers and Internet access) and the skills to access those resources. The Appendix lists several online resources for beginning teachers.

For additional discussion of how states are recruiting and retaining rural educators, see the December 1999 ERIC Digest from the Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Attracting and Retaining Teachers in Rural Areas, which is available online at http://www.ael.org/eric/digests/edorc997.htm

Supporting Bilingual and Minority Teachers

As the linguistic and ethnic diversity of schools across the country increases, the number of bilingual educators and teachers of color is on the decline (Lankard, 1994; Torres-Guzman & Goodwin, 1995). Nationally, minorities represent only 13.5 percent of the teacher workforce, but more than 30 percent of the student population (Lenhardt, 2000). According to Lankard (1994), "the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education has predicted that minority teachers will represent less than 5 percent of all U.S. teachers by the year 2000." This is already the case in the Northwest, where students of color represent more than 17 percent of the student population (Lenhardt, 2000). The ratio of minority students to teachers is expected to grow even wider as fewer people of color and speakers of other languages enter the field of education (Lankard, 1994; Torres-Guzman & Goodwin, 1995).

How can schools support, encourage, and retain bilingual and minority teachers? The first step, according to Lankard (1994), is to make "a cultural transformation within the institution," in which multiculturalism and diversity become not just values, but priorities: "Faculty diversity needs to be seen as crucial to the multicultural school environment" (Lankard, 1994). All students need to see successful adults from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds represented on the school staff. Students and teachers should also see that their home culture and language are valued at school.

Another step schools can take to better support minority and bilingual teachers is to ensure induction programs take into account teachers' prior experience, perspectives, and needs

(Kestner, 1994). Probably the best way to do this is simply to ask new teachers to identify areas in which they most need and want support.

Induction and mentoring programs should also be developed as much as possible in relation to teachers' assignments (Kestner, 1994). Torres-Guzman (1996) suggests, for example, that new bilingual teachers fare best when they are assigned mentors who teach the same grade level, content area, and language of instruction. This allows for more specific "instructional talk" directly linked to bilingual teaching: when to use which language, how and when to test English- language learners, how to make curriculum more inclusive, etc. (Torres-Guzman, 1996). In cases when there are no experienced bilingual teachers available to mentor novices, Torres-Guzman recommends developing more "dyadic" mentoring relationships, in which non-bilingual veteran teachers can learn from their bilingual mentees about language acquisition and strategies for working with English-language learners.

Other areas in which bilingual teachers may need additional support include locating bilingual teaching materials, identifying appropriate language assessment tools, and dealing with "conflicting philosophies" about bilingual education in the school and community (Sosa & Gonzales, 1993).

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

From a policymaker's standpoint, providing adequate support for new teachers is important for several reasons. To begin with, there is significant public interest in programs to improve school and teacher effectiveness (Halford, 1999). According to a 1998 poll conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., more than 90 percent of Americans support "establishing special programs for new teachers in which able, veteran teachers would serve as mentors to newly hired teachers" (Lenhardt, 2000, p. 27). Other factors that have led to policymakers' increased focus on new teachers include the following:

- *Student achievement:* Student learning and school performance are directly related to teacher effectiveness (Geringer, 2000). Although teacher ability is certainly not the only factor that plays into students' success in school, studies have shown that students with more experienced and better-trained teachers tend to score better on standardized tests. In one study of teacher effectiveness, researchers found that "students of effective teachers showed impressive gains, regardless of prior achievement" while students taught by a series of ineffective teachers, "including students with high previous levels of achievement, failed to show appropriate academic growth" (Goodwin, 1999, p. 1).

- *School quality:* If schools are to meet the high standards outlined by state and federal governments, they must be able to attract, support, and retain quality teachers. Districts staffed by a steady stream of less experienced educators struggle to implement school reform efforts and generally score lower on measures of school effectiveness (Geringer, 2000).

- *Cost:* The more beginners that leave the field, the more money that must be spent on recruiting, hiring, and training their

replacements. Funding quality teacher induction programs—up to $5,000 per new teacher per year in some district— has proven to be more cost-effective than the alternative (Halford, 1999; Moir, n.d.).

• *Teacher shortages:* U.S. schools will need to fill approximately two million vacancies in the next decade, with the highest demands in "perennially hard-to-staff" urban schools, and in subject areas such as bilingual education, special education, math, and science (Geringer, 2000; Lenhardt, 2000; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). By 2005, more than 35,900 new teachers will be needed in the five Northwest states alone (Lenhardt, 2000).

In a report released by the Education Commission of the States in July 2000, Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer identifies beginning teacher support and induction programs as an important piece of legislative strategies aimed at retaining teachers and increasing teacher quality. State-mandated multi-year teacher induction programs have already been developed in several states, including Missouri and Colorado (Goodwin, 1999). In other states, such as Washington and Nebraska, state leaders provide incentives and varying levels of support for districts that develop programs for beginners, but don't require all districts to participate.

To be sure, mandating school districts to implement teacher induction programs will ensure that something is done for new teachers. However, making new teacher induction a funding priority, and then providing incentives for schools to develop strong programs, would be a less-coercive and more locally responsive means of achieving the same ends.

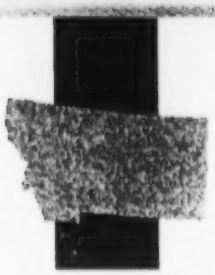
Conclusion

Unlike most other fields, in which new hires spend years training and building up to more challenging assignments, first-year teachers are generally expected to take on the same duties and responsibilities as people who have been teaching for 20 years. It is no wonder, when new teachers are left simply to "sink or swim" under these circumstances, that so many beginners leave the profession.

As we look at ways to improve teachers' first experiences in the classroom, it is important to remember that learning to teach effectively takes time (Huling-Austin, 1992). No matter how well new teachers are prepared in college, they will require guidance, support, and opportunities to learn from more experienced educators as they make the transition from being a student to having students of their own. Schools that provide high levels of support for beginners will not only retain more teachers, but better teachers - and students will reap the rewards of a more positive and effective learning environment overall (Goodwin, 1999).

NORTHWEST SAMPLER

On the following pages are descriptions of three beginning teacher assistance programs. Two are district-run programs, and one is a National Science Foundation collaborative to support beginning mathematics and science teachers in Montana. These Northwest programs represent just a few of the many promising efforts found around the region. Included with the descriptions are contact information, observed outcomes, and keys to each program's success. Also included are examples of how unions and state departments are supporting beginning teachers.



Program

Montana Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation (STEP) Program

Contact

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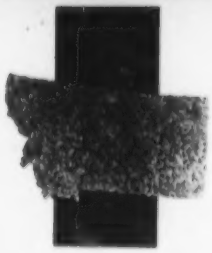
Description

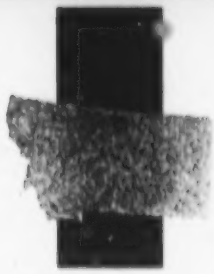
The numbers of those receiving mathematics and science teaching certification in Montana have held steady at about 75 during each of the last five years. Montana produces a surplus of new teachers each year, with half of those certified obtaining jobs in-state and the other half seeking positions elsewhere. Yet, high attrition rates, reaching 30 percent per year in some rural districts, have created awareness of the need for a support system for new teachers. The STEP program's goal is to provide early career support and training throughout the state and serve as a model for other rural states. The program is a statewide alliance of the Montana University System, tribal community colleges, the Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the Montana Science Teachers Association. The project was initially funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), but receives significant support from the state university system. It is one of the 32 NSF Collaboratives for Excellence in Teacher Preparation (CETP).



STEP's Early Career (EC) mentoring program is in its sixth year. The mentoring program provides mentors to first- through fourth-year elementary mathematics and science teachers throughout the state. The mentoring program builds on the project's first phase, which began in 1993. This phase included the comprehensive reform of mathematics, science, and education curricula, as well as field experiences for future teachers attending Montana's universities and tribal colleges. The mentor training model adopted by STEP was initially based on the state of Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training Program (B.E.S.T.), but now incorporates elements from many programs. STEP's distance delivery model for new teacher mentoring was developed to fit Montana's rural context.

A statewide application process matches up mentors and EC teachers. Since the program's start six years ago, 90 trained mentors have served 275 early career teachers. Currently the program has 45 EC teachers and 37 mentors. Since 75 new science and mathematics teachers, and around 450 elementary teachers, graduate from Montana state universities each year, this number of EC teachers in the mentor program is significant.

This distance-based model of mentoring is used because many of the EC teachers work in remote areas spread over the large, rural state, where they are often the only mathematics or science teacher in the school. The ECs and mentors meet initially in small groups, and then primarily communicate by e-mail (using the state's education telecommunications network, METNET), by phone, and through facilitated online discussions in small groups of 8–10 ECs and mentors. Elisabeth Swanson, the program's director, says that telementoring provides teachers with a resource to ask for help outside their district, which allows them to maintain a sense of autonomy and of belonging to a statewide



professional community. The majority of STEP ECs, whether teaching in a rural or urban community, state that they prefer an out-of-district STEP mentor so they can discuss problems openly, yet maintain privacy.

Because mathematics and science teachers are so isolated in Montana, and have little support, a goal for this program is to help beginning teachers be more autonomous, resourceful, and confident. Part of this is teaching them how to be more reflective in their learning process, and to come up with solutions on their own.

Another goal has been to retain Native American students in mathematics and science teaching. "Thirteen percent of Montana's K-12 student population is Native American," remarks Swanson, "but when this project began in 1993, only five of the state's 1,500 secondary mathematics and science teachers were Native American." As a result of mentoring, summer institutes, and a scholarship program, almost 150 Native American students now have completed or are making progress toward elementary and secondary certification. Every year four or five ECs in the mentoring program are Native American. In addition to the mentoring support through the project, tribal colleges have STEP-affiliated faculty members who work closely with beginning Native teachers.

Observed Outcomes

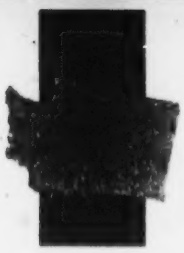
Early career teachers:

- Focus on how to teach, not what to teach
- Engage students in active inquiry and problem solving
- Are more open to trying new teaching methods
- Collaborate with peers and master teachers
- Learn how to design and implement multiple assessments

Keys to Success

Make sure mentors:

- Go through a training program to increase their effectiveness
- Teach the same content areas and grade levels (when possible)
- Establish trust with their early career teachers via such methods as conducting reciprocal interviews using specially designed guidebooks
- Work to help teachers learn to develop solutions to their own problems



Program

Kent School District Mentor Program

Contact

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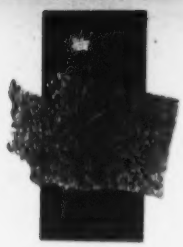
Description

The Kent School District Mentor program provides professional development, encouragement, and support for all teachers and specialists new to the Kent School District, especially beginning teachers. Almost two-thirds of the funding for the program comes from the school district, another third comes from the state's teacher assistance program, and the rest comes from a pilot grant. Currently 110 beginning teachers, four experienced teachers, 52 specialist mentors, and three full-time Mentor Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) are enrolled in the program.

Each classroom teacher and specialist new to the district is assigned a partner teacher for one year. The partner teachers, who are selected and assigned by the principal, meet weekly with the new teacher, usually during their grade-level weekly planning time or before and after school. Partner teachers receive two hours of paid inservice. They do not make classroom observations.

In addition to partner teachers, Mentor Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) are assigned to each beginning K–12 class-



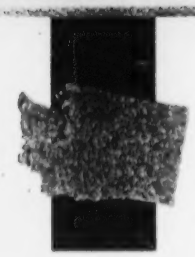
room teacher. They provide staff development and coordination for all aspects of the Mentor Program. TOSAs provide a minimum of four classroom observations, and provide drop-in and regularly scheduled visits.

Beginning education specialists are also assigned mentors. The mentors communicate weekly with the beginning teacher, providing encouragement and support, as well as curriculum and instruction resources. The mentors must complete four classroom observations and coordinate an individual professional growth plan with each teacher. Mentors do not perform any evaluations.

The Mentor program offers several classes taught both by the TOSAs and by other district teachers. All the classes are offered for credit. Topics include classroom strategies for beginning teachers, classroom management, math for beginning teachers, grading and parent conferences, and diversity.

Kent's program has received high accolades from the Office of Public Instruction. Fortunately, says Linda Rice, facilitator of the program, the district strongly believes in providing assistance to beginning teachers during their provisional contract time, and has consistently funded the program.

Rice, who is a full-time Mentor on Special Assignment, emphasizes that because effective teaching increases student achievement, it is vitally important to provide support to beginning teachers. It is also important that mentors receive quality training in best practices of teaching standards, classroom management, curriculum and assessment, and coaching. Rice suggests that qualities of an effective mentor include being a recognized skilled leader, passionate about students and learning; a profes-



sional role model; an effective communicator and listener; sensitive to the needs of the mentee; and trained in cognitive coaching.

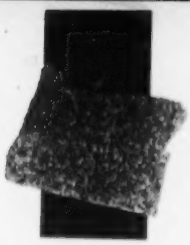
Observed Outcomes

Beginning teachers:

- Demonstrate more effective classroom management strategies; they are more consistent, confident, and effective in dealing with student behavior and in establishing classroom rules, procedures, and consequences.
- Understand and use the reading and math curricula more effectively.
- Have a greater sense of efficacy in grading and parent conferences.
- Experiment with making their lessons interactive and engaging.
- Practice self-reflection as a strategy to improve their instruction.
- Demonstrate a greater knowledge of the characteristics, skills, and abilities of the age group they teach.
- Feel supported, have a place to get all their questions answered, know there's a listening ear for their concerns, and are reassured that all beginning teachers are in the same boat—they are not alone.

Keys to Success

- Take time to build trust and rapport.
- Reassure beginners that you are not their evaluator—merely there to make their life easier.
- Meet weekly with beginners at first; then decide who needs you the most and schedule accordingly.
- Limit full-time caseload to 12–15 beginners per mentor.
- Make sure mentors receive quality training.
- Move beyond emotional support to professional growth.



Program

Portland Public Schools Beginning Teacher Mentor Program

Contact

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Description

Portland Public School's Beginning Teacher Mentoring Program is a "systematic and coordinated effort to provide support to beginning teachers during their first year in the teaching profession." Program goals are:

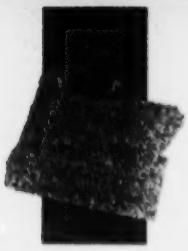
- To assist beginning teachers in understanding the complexities of teaching through the support of a mentor teacher who will act as coach, resource, role model, and facilitator
- To provide both mentors and beginning teachers professional development in standards-based instruction
- To provide training opportunities focused on the needs of beginning teachers
- To provide a support network to help integrate beginning teachers and make district, building, and community resources available to them
- To promote and encourage peer support and peer coaching at the school level
- To provide experienced teachers opportunities for professional growth

- To provide resources and ongoing support to encourage the retention of beginning teachers in the district

Both mentors and beginning teachers are selected through an application process. One mentor is assigned to each beginning teacher in the program (for the year 2000–2001, there were 40 mentor teams). Whenever possible, mentors and mentees are from the same school, and teach the same grade and/or subject area. Mentors and beginning teacher teams have weekly contact (90 hours per year). Demonstration teaching, coaching, instructional support (procedures, lesson planning, strategies, etc.), and moral support are all part of this contact. In addition, mentor teams attend and participate in monthly team meetings, fall orientation workshops, and other training sessions.

The mentor's role is to act as a guide, coach, role model, resource, facilitator/trainer, and colleague to the beginning teacher. Mentors are selected based on established successful teaching experience, demonstrated exemplary ability in providing appropriate instructional tools to students, and having effective planning strategies, subject matter knowledge, and a mastery of effective teaching strategies. Mentors receive training in peer team coaching strategies and guidelines for being effective role models and mentors.

Jane Arkes, the program's coordinator, emphasizes the "almost endless" needs of beginning teachers. "New teachers almost always romanticize the role of a teacher," says Arkes. "They begin with strong feelings of 'making a difference' and are usually very idealistic about how to achieve their goals. They are almost immediately hit with a lot of expectations and problems that they did not anticipate." For example, experienced teachers may assume new teachers know certain things, such as how to prepare for parent conferences, and when they don't know, novice teachers become addi-



tionally stressed, feeling inadequate. Therefore, emotional/psychological support from mentors and administrators is as important, and perhaps even more important, than instruction-related support. Arkes emphasizes that novice teachers need "practice and good caring guidance" from mentors who are good listeners and who make them figure out solutions to their own problems.

In addition to the formal mentoring program, other means of support are available for beginning teachers. All new teachers to the district are paid to attend a three-day orientation prior to the beginning of school. In the fall, a five-session survival skills inservice class is offered. Each new teacher is given a teacher handbook that contains a variety of useful information: how to order a substitute, tips on discipline, suggestions for working with parents, etc.

Observed Outcomes

- Teams indicate that they value the time to work together; coaching and classroom visits are critical parts of the program.
- Attendance is high at the monthly meetings.
- Participants indicate on evaluations that meeting topics are right on target with their most pressing needs.

Keys to Success

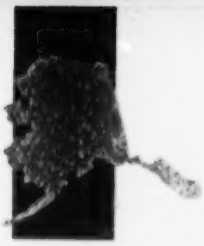
- The district must make a financial commitment to the mentor program for it to be successful.
- The coordinator must be allowed adequate time to devote to the program without the burden of additional responsibilities.
- All departments in the district should be made aware of the needs of beginning teachers and of the responsibility each has in providing information and support.
- Goals and guidelines should be well-defined.
- Mentors should be paid for giving time to work with novice teachers.

TEACHER UNION SUPPORT

The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) play an important role in developing mentoring and induction programs. State and local affiliates of both organizations work with school districts to implement such programs. NEA-Alaska President Rich Kronberg states, "As we come to understand as a proven fact that quality teachers are the most significant variable in student success, supporting teacher professional development becomes more and more of a priority for the NEA and local affiliates." This support is especially crucial in Alaska, where teacher salaries have steadily dropped, and there is a need not only to attract teachers to the state (70 percent of teachers come from out-of-state) but also to retain in-state teachers.

NEA-Alaska provides workshops and training to the local affiliates to develop their programs. Mark Jones, the UniServ Director who provides much of the training, empowers the local organizations to take responsibility for program development and management. The Ketchikan Education Association, for example, has taken primary responsibility for building a very successful mentor program in that district. The Anchorage Education Association has developed a mentor program utilizing the expertise of retired teachers as mentors. Anchorage School District's Indian Education and special education programs also have their own teacher mentor programs.

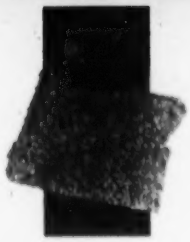
Jones emphasizes strongly in his training that the mentor/teacher relationship be strictly confidential and that it not be tied to a teacher's evaluation. "The whole notion of having a good [mentor/beginning teacher] relationship is providing the opportunity to get all the issues out on the table." In fact, says Jones, there



are statistics to show that the success rate of mentor relationships where communication was confidential is 30 percent greater than in relationships where information was open.

NEA-Alaska and the Anchorage Education Association have partnered with the University of Alaska and several school districts in a five-year federal grant that pairs a fifth-year student with a mentor for a full-year field experience, rather than a student teaching experience. This partnership, called the Alaska Partnership for Teacher Enhancement (APTE), is generating a cadre of well-trained and experienced mentors. APTE is defining and refining the skills, training, and program strategies that will be used in all mentor programs in the state. Jones, the NEA-Alaska representative and mentor trainer, has developed courses of study through APTE and has already added them to the Ketchikan mentor-training program. APTE and NEA-Alaska have some common goals. Among them are the development of a well-grounded mentor program and the establishment of a long-term approach to mentorships that effectively creates a "community of learners" environment in every school. Says Jones, "This collegial atmosphere will do more to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools that most other proposed reforms."

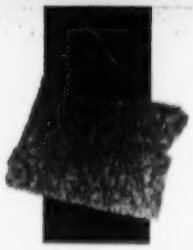
In addition to establishing mentoring programs, NEA-Alaska has also established a coaching program to provide support for teachers who are placed on a plan of improvement. Under Alaska tenure laws, if a tenured teacher placed on the improvement plan for 90–180 days fails to meet the standards of the plan, they are non-retained. Coaches provide support to enable teachers to reach specific goals and performance standards of the plan. Training for coaches focuses on diagnosing and prescribing remedies for teaching deficiencies.



Kronberg acknowledges that providing quality support for beginning teachers is more challenging in the rural and remote districts of Alaska. He has begun discussions with leaders of the Intertribal Council on jointly developing a cultural mentoring program for teachers new to a village. The retention rate of teachers in remote village schools is especially low. Some rural districts have teacher turnover rates in the 30–40 percent range and some village schools have 100 percent turnover from one year to the next. The cultural mentoring program would utilize aides and others from the village as "mentors" who can help acclimate the new teacher to the village culture.

In Oregon, teacher unions are spearheading efforts to develop teacher-mentoring programs. Over the last two years, members of the Oregon Education Association, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon School Boards Association, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, and several universities (e.g., Western Oregon University and Lewis and Clark College) have worked together on the Mentor Advocacy Partnership. The Partnership's focus is to promote an Oregon mentor program for new teachers in the state; that is, to reestablish the teacher mentor efforts that ran out of funding in the 1980s. A "mentor bill" has been submitted to the Oregon legislature, in part, to establish a fund or "seed money" that would support schools districts' efforts to develop and implement teacher mentor programs across the state.

Members of the Partnership are developing a teacher mentor handbook to guide districts in program development. Some of the key principles outlined in the handbook include taking time and care in "matching" mentor with protégé, as well as ensuring the development of both the mentor as well as the protégé throughout the process. Brad Lenhardt, a NWREL teacher development



associate working on the handbook, notes that "a key element to the success of a mentor program is that in order for trust to be developed between the mentor and protégé, the mentoring cannot be part of the formal, summative evaluation process."

Oregon and Alaska are just two of many states where unions are actively involved in teacher mentoring and support. For more information about union involvement see the NEA Web site at http://nea.org or the AFT Web site at http://aft.org

State Organized Programs

From 1984 to 1999 the number of state beginning teacher assistance programs has grown from eight to 27 (Harding, McLain, & Anderson, 1999). Although the programs vary from state to state, all 27 states use mentors to assist beginning teachers. Many states require beginning teachers to go through an assistance program, while others make it optional. Seven states offer partial or complete state funding for mentor programs.

Below are examples of what two states are doing to develop teacher assistance programs.

Idaho Mentor Program

Providing support to beginning teachers is a high priority for the Idaho state legislature. Although Idaho had provided funding to districts through the Idaho Mentor Program since 1996, this funding was not considered adequate; teachers were simply not getting the support they needed to be effective. In 2000, the legislature passed a new law with a funding total of $2 million for districts. The new mentor program now has much more rigid standards. Any district that applies for funding must submit a comprehensive plan detailing how they plan to provide cohesive support to beginning teachers including mentoring, professional development, peer assistance, and evaluation components. Each district's program will be reviewed every three years. The state provides a set of guidelines for districts to develop their teacher assistance program. This past year, 78 districts out of 112 applied for funding.

For more information contact: Larry Norton, Idaho Department of Education, at (208) 332-6884 or lnorton@sde.state.id.us

Washington State Teacher Assistance Program (TAP)

Since 1985, Washington's Teacher Assistance Program (TAP) at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has provided state funding for beginning teacher programs. These funds are given to school districts to pay for the stipends of experienced mentors, training for both mentors and beginning teachers, and release time for participants to observe other teachers.

In the 2000–2001 school year, 2,543 educators in Washington participated in TAP. Most districts run their own programs funded by a combination of TAP and district funds. Some districts, especially the smaller ones, utilize Education Service District resources as well. The TAP funding for each participating teacher was $1,270 for 2000–2001. The stipends for mentors are 57 percent of the program budget.

In addition to the funding, TAP offers district staff assistance and resources to develop their mentoring/induction program, including training mentors to do observations. The TAP Web site (http://www.k12.wa.us/profed/tap) also offers numerous resources. For beginning teachers there are tips on lesson planning, and active participation strategies. For mentors, observation and feedback techniques and demonstration lessons are listed. Resources for administrators include key questions for selecting, training, and supporting mentors; key questions for program content and evaluation; and a list of qualities of effec-

tive mentors. The Web site also includes as a model for districts to follow the schedule for Snoqualmie Valley School District's year-long induction program.

Currently, the TAP advisory committee is developing a set of standards that mentor programs must meet to receive funding. These standards are closely aligned with the professional certification standards. The proposed standards include:

- Clearly designated program leadership; leaders must have proficiency in instructional strategies
- Sustained support for all participants including training, a clear plan to carry out the support that describes the time frame, contact hours, and implementation design
- Alignment with the Continuum of Teacher Development using the Professional Certificate standards as a foundation
- Clear and appropriate criteria for selection, placement, and training of mentors
- Clearly defined plan for the support of new educators that includes formative observations, informal and formal contact, and a new educator's professional development plan

In May 2001, beginning teachers enrolled in the TAP program will be surveyed about the types of assistance they received and the effectiveness of that assistance. The results will be used to identify exemplary programs. Washington beginning teachers surveyed in 1999 said that they wished they had more contact with their mentors and that increased time with their mentors, including more observation time, would increase their effectiveness as teachers.

The TAP advisory committee also hopes to hold a one-week mentor training academy. Sue Anderson, the TAP program

director, stresses that having highly effective mentors is the single most important ingredient in the success of an effective mentoring program. "Mentors need ongoing training, and need to be recognized monetarily for their time," says Anderson.

For more information contact: Sue Anderson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at (360) 586-3448 or sanderson@ospi.wednet.edu

APPENDIX

Resources for Beginning Teachers

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http://www.middleweb.com/1stDResources.html
MiddleWeb's First Day's of Middle School section offers dozens of links and resources for both beginning and experienced teachers.

http://www.teachnet.org/
TeachNet.org is the World Wide Web site for IMPACT II—The Teachers Network, a national nonprofit organization that sup-

ports classroom teachers in the United States. This site has a new teacher helpline—nine veteran teachers answer questions within 72 hours, and includes a searchable database of 900 curriculum projects and grant resources.

Mentoring Resources

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New Teacher Center (NTC)
725 Front Street, Suite 206
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Phone: (831) 459-4323
Fax: (831) 459-3822
E-mail: ntc@zzyx.ucsc.edu
Web site: http://www.newteachercenter.org

A nationally recognized resource dedicated to teacher development and the support of programs and practices that promote excellence and diversity in America's teaching force. Center staff conduct original research into vital issues of mentoring and beginning teacher assistance, as well as perform program evaluation and provide support to teachers and mentors who are themselves conducting research. The Center also provides training workshops for mentors and mentor program coordinators such as an annual symposium on teacher induction, mentoring foundations, coaching and observation strategies for working with beginning teachers, and creating a model of ongoing professional development for mentors.

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